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A series of short biographies

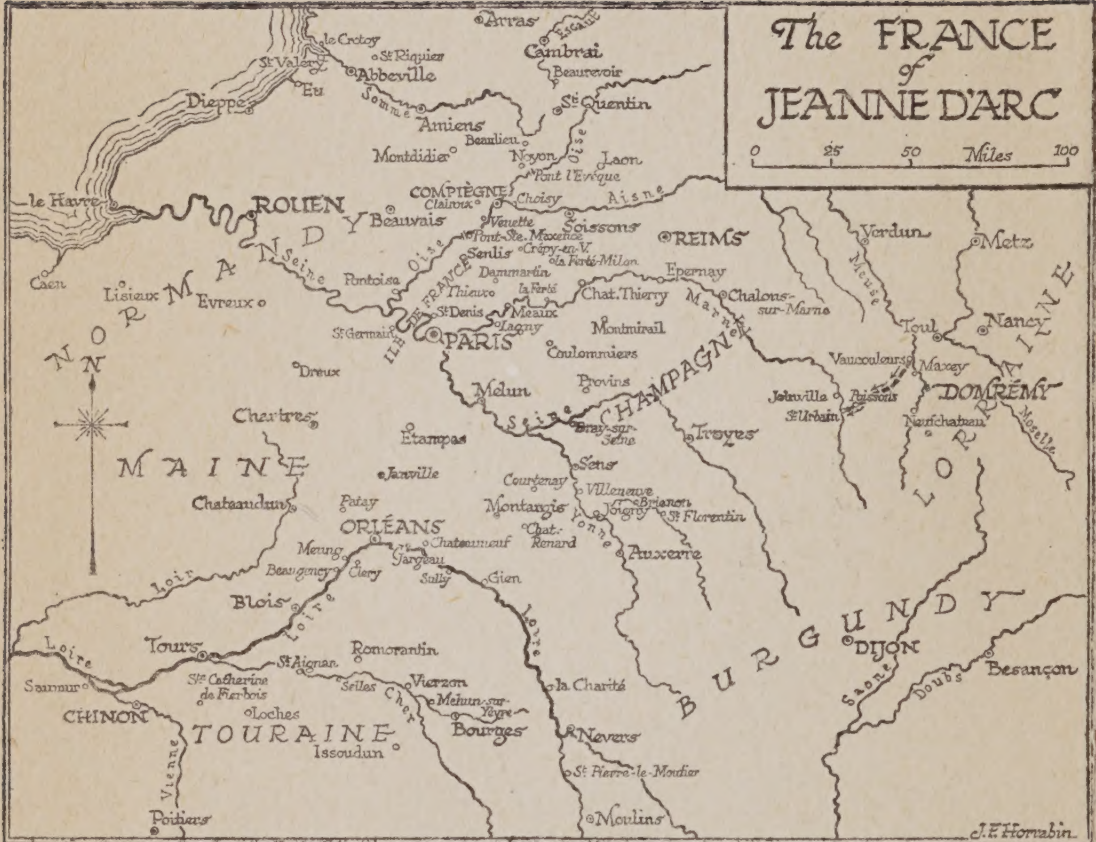
JOAN OF ARC

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The FRANCE of JEANNE D'ARC

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JOAN OF ARC

V. Sackville-West



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1937

A LIST OF USEFUL DATES

The Hundred Years' War begins	-		1337
The Birth of Joan of Arc	- - -	January	1412
The Battle of Agincourt	- - -		1415
The Treaty of Troyes	- - -		1420
Henry V of England dies, and Henry VI comes to the throne	-		1422
Charles VI of France dies, and Charles VII comes to the throne	-		1422
Joan of Arc appears at Chinon	-	March	1429
She raises the siege of Orleans	- -	May	1429
Charles VII is crowned at Rheims	-	July	1429
Unsuccessful attack on Paris	- -	September	1429
Joan taken prisoner at Compiègne	-	May	1430
Joan at Rouen as a prisoner	- -	December	1430
Her trial begun	- - - -	January	1431
Condemned and burnt	- - -	May	1431
Canonised as a saint	- - -	May	1920

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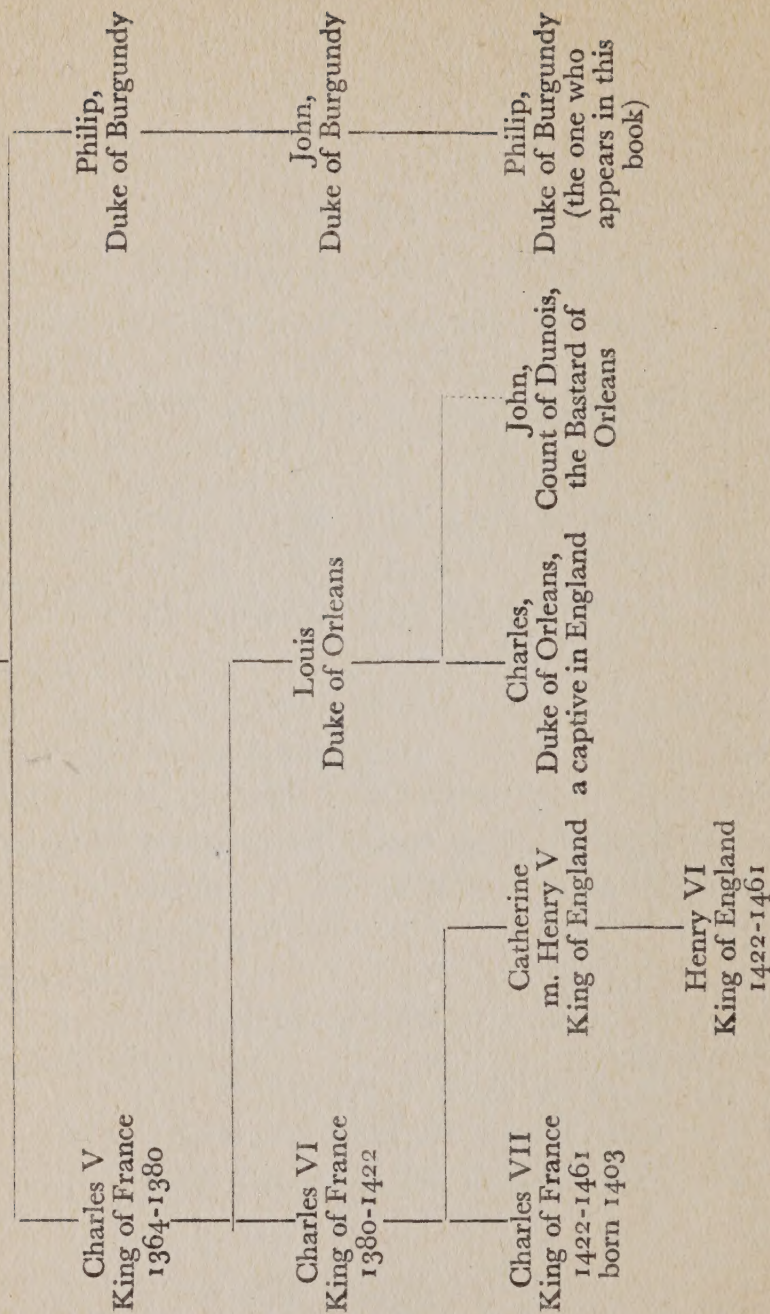
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JOHN, King of France 1350-1364



Part I

Chapter I: Joan of Arc and the Hundred Years' War

i

THE life story of St. Joan of Arc is perhaps one of the most exciting, interesting, and mysterious in all history. I suppose that nearly everybody knows the bare facts: how a French child of twelve, a simple peasant, one day heard a voice commanding her to go to her King to persuade him to give her an army, and to march against the English in battle. They know also that she eventually obeyed the command, turned the English out of the city of Orleans, which they were then besieging, defeated them in many other battles, was finally taken prisoner, and was burned to death as a witch at the age of nineteen. They know that she was called the Maid of Orleans, and that five hundred years after she had been burnt as a witch she was made a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. Surely there could be no more extraordinary story, and it is even more extraordinary in its details than in its bare outline, for luckily we still possess such vivid accounts of Joan as to make her seem more like a person living in our own day than like a person who died nearly five hundred years ago. We have the stories told of her by people who actually did know her, both as a little girl in her native village

and later on as the captain of the French army, and we have the full report of her trial with all her answers given in her own words. We know what she looked like, and what she liked to eat and drink, and what she wore, and what jokes she made when she was feeling gay. Whenever she lost her temper we are told about it, and we are told also about the way she scolded the great and important men who surrounded her. There are very few historical figures whom we can get to know so humanly and personally, quite apart from knowing the great deeds for which they are remembered in the history books. Many historical figures appear to us rather stiff and unreal, like waxworks with strange and beautiful clothes arranged upon them, and a few dates and facts attached to their names; but Joan of Arc, for those who take the trouble to know something of her, is not at all like that. She is not wax, but a real living person with her faults as well as her virtues; so real, that you feel sure a drop of blood would come from her finger if you pricked it, and she would cry—for amongst the many small things we know about this great saint, soldier and martyr, is that she cried very easily, whenever she was upset, frightened, cross, or hurt.

Of course there are the usual dull and dry facts of history which have to be mastered before we can come to an understanding of her true achievement. They can be explained in a few pages, after which we can go on to the only really interesting way of studying history, which is by gaining a vivid knowledge of the men and

women who made it. For history is not only dates and facts, but Life itself, and it goes on creating itself every day, not as an abstract thing, but as the natural consequence of the characters and feelings and ambitions of the people we read about every day in the papers. And as it is to-day, so it was always. It is only the failure to realize this fact which can possibly make history appear dull, dreary, and sometimes meaningless.

If we take a quick glance at the condition of France when Joan of Arc was a child, we shall then be able to understand the tremendous mission she was called upon to accomplish.

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When she was born, in 1412, the war we now call the Hundred Years' War had been going on between France and England for seventy-five years. It had started in 1337, and meant that the Kings of England were determined to become Kings of France also. This sounds an outrageously unjustified thing for them to wish to do—to seize somebody else's country for their own—but as a matter of fact they had certain perfectly justified claims over a large part of France, claims which they had obtained through their marriages with various French princesses who brought some of the rich provinces of France to the English crown. It is easier to understand the position in France, if we put it into terms of our own country. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the

Kings of France had acquired the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Middlesex through their marriages with various English princesses, and that London had thus become their capital in this country-beyond-their-country. Let us suppose also that, not content with this, the greed of the Kings of France was such that they determined to extend these possessions by conquest until they had absorbed the whole of England, and had engaged in war with the English with this object in view, so that French troops overran even the parts of England to which the King of France had no right at all. We must then imagine that the French were so successful in the pursuance of this war as to reduce the King of England to very little more than the possession of Wiltshire, Somerset, and Devon. We must imagine also that the King of England had been driven into such a corner as to make a treaty with the King of France to the effect that he (the King of France) should marry his (the King of England's) daughter, and should thereby become the lawful heir to the whole of England.

To reverse the positions in this way takes some thinking out, but it is worth doing if we are to realize at all what was happening in France.

When Joan of Arc was eight years old, that is to say in 1420, a very important treaty, such as I have imagined above, was in fact signed by the mad King of France, Charles VI, and the English King, Henry V. This treaty, which was called the Treaty of Troyes, and was largely the outcome of smashing English victories such as Agincourt in 1415, arranged

that Henry V should marry the daughter of Charles VI, and should succeed Charles VI on the throne of France. Thus France and England would finally become united under one crown.

Henry V did marry the French princess, Catherine, and did thus become the son-in-law of the French King and legal heir to the French throne. Unfortunately for the peace of the two countries, Henry V and Charles VI died two years later within two months of each other (Henry in August 1422, and Charles in October 1422), each leaving a son who, for different reasons, could claim to be regarded as the rightful King of France. One of them was rightful King by treaty, the other was rightful King by birth. The situation was full of dangers and difficulties. It was quite obvious that the partisans of each new King would support his claim and thus prolong the miserable struggle. The new little English King, Henry VI, was only a baby nine months old; the new French King, Charles VII, was a youth of nineteen, without very much character or power of decision. They were both in the hands of powerful and older men. Henry's uncle, the Duke of Bedford, was Regent of France in his name; Charles was almost entirely controlled by four or five counsellors, amongst whom I need mention only the Archbishop of Rheims and the Duke de la Tremoille, a very fat untrustworthy man, who was less careful of poor Charles's pocket than of his own. And Charles, although nominally a king, was anything but rich. He was sometimes reduced to borrowing money

from his cook and to patching the sleeves of his doublet with his old clothes.

We might reasonably expect to find that these men were all determined to secure the Kingdom of France for their own king. The Duke of Bedford was indeed determined to do so. But Charles VII's counsellors were extraordinarily slack, and indeed it looks rather as though they preferred to follow a do-nothing policy which would give them the least possible trouble. Perhaps they argued, with some justice, that it was scarcely worth while carrying on the war against the English with very much energy. The English had been victorious in the field and, besides, they had the Treaty of Troyes to back them. They already held a large part of France. They were far richer than poor Charles, who could scarcely pay his soldiers and often didn't. They had the strong, red-faced Duke of Bedford at their head, which more than made up for their having only a baby as their King. All these arguments must have weighed heavily with the counsellors of Charles VII. Besides, there was another argument, which deserves a paragraph to itself.

✦ This argument concerns the Duke of Burgundy. You might naturally expect to find that all Frenchmen were united in a common desire to drive the foreigner out of their country. Oddly enough, it did not work out like that at all. The Duke of Burgundy, for instance, who was quite the most powerful vassal of the French crown, was wholly in alliance with the English. This is a very important point to remember,

since it created a split within France herself: it created a whole party, known as the Burgundian party, or sometimes as the Anglo-Burgundian party, which was in favour of putting the English King on the throne of France instead of the by-birth-rightful King with nothing but French royal blood in his veins. It seems curious that the Duke of Burgundy should have adopted so unpatriotic an attitude towards his own country of France as to support the claims of a foreign sovereign, but so it was. There were several reasons why he should have thrown in his lot with the enemies of the French King; for instance, he believed Charles VII to be responsible for the murder of his (the Duke of Burgundy's) own father, and had taken an oath that that assassin Charles should never ascend the throne of France. This is only one reason out of many, and the fact remains that the Duke of Burgundy was the chief ally of the English and the chief enemy of Charles VII within his own domains. We can well imagine that the position of Charles VII was anything but easy, when we consider that his own greatest vassal was against him, that his country was filled with foreign troops in occupation, and that his own intimate counsellors were not the sort of men to take any decisive action on his behalf. There was, however, a party in France which was more loyal to Charles VII than the Duke of Burgundy and his Burgundians, and more energetic than the counsellors immediately surrounding Charles. The men of this party were known as the Armagnacs, from the name of their

first leader, and it included many valiant captains whose names become very familiar to us as we read the life of Joan of Arc.

There are two other things which ought to be explained at this point. One is, that Charles VII had never yet been crowned, even by his own party, and that consequently he was not known as the King but as the Dauphin, which was the title always bestowed on the eldest son of the King of France, in much the same way as the heir to the English throne is known as the Prince of Wales. Joan of Arc herself was always very careful to refer to Charles VII as the Dauphin until the crown had actually been set on his head at Rheims. Of course in England the Prince of Wales becomes King immediately his father dies, but in the case of Charles VII it must be remembered that the succession was disputed, so that it was not until he had been crowned that he could safely claim the title of King.

The other point concerns the nature of the war which, by the time Joan of Arc arrived to take charge, had been going on for ninety-two years. We are accustomed nowadays to think of war as a very terrible and intensive thing, and indeed if the Hundred Years' War had been conducted on anything like the scale of the recent Great War of 1914-18, nobody would have been left alive at all either in France or England. But the Hundred Years' War was much more an affair of constant scraps and scuffles, with occasional big battles and occasional long sieges of fortified towns. Even the big battles

were not very destructive of life; at Agincourt, for instance, only about 9,000 English soldiers are thought to have been employed, with a total loss of 1,600. The French losses at Agincourt, of course, were considerably larger, and have never been accurately estimated. Apart from these few big battles, and apart from sieges such as the siege of Orleans, the principal way in which the poor people of France suffered was from a feeling of insecurity and a constant dread of unexpected raids. The French farmer, for example, never knew when a troop of English or Burgundian soldiery was not about to swoop down on his village, burn his houses and his church, ruin his crops, and drive away his cattle. In this way, even in the most rural provinces, in spite of having no newspapers, no wireless, and no means of getting news except by letters or word of mouth, they were able to realize only too painfully the miserable state of the whole of their country. And this takes us back to the village of Domremy in Lorraine, where the little daughter of Jacques and Isabelle d'Arc was growing up, with no idea of what a dramatic and splendid life lay before her.

Chapter II: Joan of Arc as a Child in her Own Village

i

WE think of her to-day as Saint Joan of Arc, the national saint and heroine of France, the magnificent

inspired young captain riding to victory in shining armour with a red cloak floating out behind her and a white banner unfurled over her head, but in those days at Domremy she was still only an ordinary little girl playing with the other village children, helping her mother with the housework, helping to look after her father's cows and sheep, and in all ways ordering herself very piously and obediently to the wishes of her parents and her Church. For they were a pious and simple family. Jacques d'Arc was what we should now call a smallholder, with land and cattle of his own, a real countryman, though he also held a position of some prominence in his village. In other words, he was a little better off than most of his fellow villagers; a little, but not much; and owing to their upright character he and his wife were greatly respected by their neighbours and also by the local lords of the manor, who had appointed Jacques d'Arc as a sort of bailiff to their property at Domremy. But really there was nothing to distinguish Joan as in any way superior to her playmates. The d'Arc family lived in a very humble way, and there is no record of their having employed a servant or a farm-hand to help them with their daily work. On the contrary, it is quite clear that they did it all for themselves. Joan had three brothers and a sister; two of the brothers and the sister were older than herself; it is thought that the other brother was younger. The children were made to help their parents as soon as they were able. In those days there was no question of going to school

—Joan herself could not read, and never learnt to write anything except her own name—and apart from being taught her prayers and Bible stories by her mother she received no education at all. On the other hand, she did learn how to sew and spin, for, as she was later to remark rather proudly, she feared no comparison with any woman over these accomplishments. She did also learn how to drive the cattle out into the fields, just as the other Domremy children did, and she did learn how to help her father and her brothers with the ploughing. All this time she was growing up into a strong and healthy girl, with no hint of anything but the most ordinary destiny.

Even at this age—I am talking about her now when she was about twelve years old—we know quite a lot about her, quite enough to make her into a real person. For one thing, we know what her home looked like, because it still exists. We know it was a square, grey little house in the village street, dark, damp rooms with stone floors and tiny windows; the river Meuse flowed sleepily on the opposite side of the street, and the church was next to the house. One could hear the church bells ringing, close at hand. We know also what her river valley looked like, for it is much the same to-day, with its big woods and its water-meadows full of buttercups and cowslips, a lovely, rich part of France, lots of cherry-trees, small grey villages strung along the banks of the river, no large town within miles. So we can get a picture of what her background looked like, and

almost exactly how it appeared to her, but we also know a great deal more about her than that. We know it, because we have got the information provided by her own friends at Domremy, and also by herself when she was brought to trial. We know that she was never called by her real French name of Jeanne by her friends and relations, but by its diminutive of Jeannette, a difference like the difference between Margaret and Maggie. We know that she wore a red frock patched in the threadbare places. We know that she was a strong little girl, probably sturdily built rather than slender; brown eyes; and a pleasantly healthy appearance without any claims to beauty. We know for certain that her hair was black, because a single hair was once found pressed into a seal which she had made on a letter. We know also that, as a child, she must have worn it long, because we are expressly told that at the age of seventeen she cut it short. We know that she had two especial friends, called Hauviette and Mengette, and that sometimes they used to come and share her bed in her father's house. We know also that all these village children together used to go and hold picnic parties under a certain tree in the neighbourhood, known as the Fairies' Tree or *Arbre des Dames*. This tree is rather important to remember, because it led poor innocent Joan into terrible trouble later on. It was, in fact, one of the things that helped her judges to condemn her as a witch. This was most unfair, because really the Fairies' Tree had represented only a place where

Joan and her friends went for fun and for a picnic once a year, according to local custom. Witchcraft had nothing to do with it; there was nothing more than a local legend that the fairies specially patronized that tree. It is just as though you, let us say, lived in Berkshire and took out your sandwiches to eat on the great White Horse of the Berkshire Downs. No more than that. All the children of Domremy, and some of the older people, too, used to visit the Fairies' Tree just before Easter, danced round it and came away after hanging garlands on its boughs to please the fairies. Yet this was one of the things that they brought as a reproach against Joan when once they had caught her and were determined to condemn her to death.

This was the fun they had at Domremy, but there were more serious sides to life as well. Of course, it was not to be expected that village folk, even so far away as Domremy, should not hold their own political opinions just the same as folk in the rest of France. And so it came about that there were often bitter quarrels between the villages, and those of the Burgundian party often got their heads broken by those of the Dauphin's party or vice versa. Little Jeanne d'Arc grew up well accustomed to seeing her friends and the neighbours returning sorely wounded from such affrays. She grew up well accustomed to hearing men lose their tempers in political disagreement. She was accustomed, also, to the idea that the enemy—which, for her, meant the Burgundians—might invade her own village at any moment,

and force her own family and all their neighbours to take refuge with all their sheep and cattle in the nearest town. It is thus not very surprising that even so ignorant a little girl as Joan should have realized, and realized very vividly, the state that France was in.

ii

It was on a summer's day, just after the children of Domremy had been enjoying themselves in the ordinary way of country children in fine summer weather, that is to say by running races in the meadows for some simple prize such as a bunch of flowers, that her first extraordinary and unexpected experience befell Joan of Arc. She had been running races with her friends, while they were all supposed to be looking after the sheep, and we are told that being tired by her exertions she went away by herself to the edge of the meadow in order to rest and regain her breath. And while she was resting there, a boy came up to her, or so she believed, saying, "Jeannette, go home; your mother wants you." Being an obedient little girl, she got up at once and went towards her home, but her mother met her and began scolding her for having come away from her task of watching over the sheep. Joan was very much surprised at this cross greeting, and said: "But did you not send for me?" Her mother replied "No," and told her to go back to her companions.

Puzzled by these happenings, Joan again prepared to obey, and had got half-way across her father's garden when she was stopped by something which had never entered into her experience before. The familiar little garden was all round her, looking exactly the same as she had always known it; the village church was there, next door, just the same with its steeple; away in the meadow, down by the river, she could hear the voices and the laughter of her friends; everything seemed just as it had always been; yet suddenly everything became quite different; everything was blotted out by a huge cloud of light, which was not like any light she had ever seen on earth. Naturally, she stopped short, and then to her consternation a voice began speaking to her out of the cloud of light—a voice which told her the most astonishing and unlikely things. It told her that she must make her way to the Dauphin and rescue France from her enemies; also, that she must be a good girl and go frequently to church. Poor Joan was completely baffled. She was also rather frightened, for which we can scarcely blame her. She was quite ready to be a good girl, and to go frequently to church, which indeed she had always done, but as for the rest—"I am only a poor girl," she said piteously; "I don't even know how to ride, much less how to make war." Those are her own words, and it seems to me that they are exactly the words that any of us would pronounce on being confronted by so appallingly unexpected a command. After all, she had only just come away from playing

with the other children, and presumably was thinking about anything rather than the Voice of God proceeding from a cloud of light even as It had addressed Moses out of the burning bush; she may have been feeling rather perplexed by the strange boy who had come up telling her to go to her mother; she may have been wondering why her mother seemed so surprised and cross at her arrival; she may have been feeling faintly puzzled by all these things that she could not quite understand, but the crowning stupefaction of the miraculous voice was something that eclipsed all other considerations. Still, alarmed though she was, she never seems to have doubted for an instant that the command came straight from Heaven. Some people have tried to make out that she merely imagined she saw the cloud of light and heard the voice proceeding from it, but Joan herself never had any doubts about the matter. And as she was a person of absolute truthfulness and sincerity, who, in the end, preferred to let herself perish at the stake rather than deny her convictions, I think there is no need to question her belief that she was divinely inspired.

Of course in those days it was much easier for people to believe quite simply and naturally in what we might now be tempted to call the supernatural. Life was so much simpler in many ways, and people's approach to such problems so much more direct than ours. Take the case of Joan of Arc for instance. Her mind was not confused by the reading of books

or newspapers, since she could not read a word. All that she knew of God or His Saints had been learnt by word of mouth from people she trusted, such as the local priest or her own mother. This brought it all much nearer to daily life, and left no room for doubt, question, or argument. The saints she knew about seemed more like friends than like remote and awe-inspiring personages, and so it was not very long before she came to the conclusion that the Voice which had first spoken to her out of the cloud of light was none other than the voice of the great Archangel St. Michael himself. And once she had made up her mind to the fact that St. Michael was now becoming her constant companion, she very easily added the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margaret to his. These three saints, she maintained, visited her every day, and every day they brought her the same message; that she was the appointed of God, for the salvation of France.

The mysterious boy, who had apparently sent her off to her mother, never reappears in her history, and has never been explained.

iii

You might well imagine that she ran to her mother and poured out an account of this extraordinary experience which had befallen her. She did nothing of the sort. Incredible though it may seem, she kept her secret to herself for four whole years. I think

we can scarcely ask for better proof of the remarkable strength of character which was hers. Four whole years of these terrifying visitations daily, and she only a child between twelve and seventeen! Besides, it was all complicated by the fact that her father began to have dreams about her, and told her brothers that he would drown her with his own hands sooner than let her run away from home with soldiers. He did not mention these dreams to Joan himself, but he told her mother about them, and she passed them on to Joan. Still Joan said nothing. She just listened quietly to her mother as they sat together spinning or darning, and then went out into the woods or the fields where she listened to her saints instead. And when she was sixteen (that was in May 1428), she made an excuse to go away and stay with some cousins of hers who lived in a village a little way along the river, so that she might get ~~into touch with the Dauphin's lieutenant in the~~ local town.

Chapter III: Joan of Arc Sets off on Her Mission

i

HER first visit was most unsuccessful: the lieutenant simply laughed at her and told her cousin to take her away and give her a good smacking. (This may sound very modern, but it is, actually, a literal translation of what the lieutenant said.) Joan was not

in the least discouraged by this set-back. She went home obediently, and waited for another eight months before making her second attempt. Then she went back again to stay once more with her cousins. This time she knew that she was leaving her home for good. She was fond of her parents, and it must have cost her a great effort to leave them in this way without saying a word about her real intentions. She must have felt that she was tricking them, but the commands of God were even stronger than her natural affection for her parents. She could not bear to say good-bye to some of her friends in the village either, so she slipped away without saying anything much; she just called out "Good-bye!" to some of them, but they had no idea that she was saying good-bye for more than a week or two. Joan alone knew that she was going back to beard the Dauphin's lieutenant again, the same one who had said that she ought to be taken home and slapped.

It evidently proved especially difficult and painful for her to part from those two particular friends who used to come and stay with her in her father's house. To one of these two, Mengette, she just called "Good-bye!" and recommended her to God's care, but to Hauviette, who was perhaps her dearest friend of all, she spoke no word. Hauviette herself said later that when once she heard of Joan's departure, and realized that she had gone for good, she "wept bitterly, because she had loved Joan greatly for her goodness, and because she had been her friend."

ii

On this second visit, things went much better for Joan. No one knows how she managed to get round the Dauphin's lieutenant, who was a very typical, hard-headed soldier of the solid sort, but manage it she somehow or other did, and got him to promise he would send her off, right across France, to find the Dauphin in his castle of Chinon. Robert de Baudricourt, the Dauphin's lieutenant in his town of Vaucouleurs, must have been extremely taken aback by this reappearance of the little peasant from Domremy renewing her extraordinary claims and demands. It is perhaps difficult for us to understand why he ever accepted her claims and demands at all. We can only understand it by realizing that such things seemed far less odd and unusual in those days than they would now, and that if a girl turned up, claiming to have been sent by God through the voice of His saints, a hearty soldier like Robert de Baudricourt would be quite well disposed to believe it. Besides, Joan gave him a sign which finally convinced him: she told him that the Dauphin's army had suffered a defeat in battle near Orleans that very same day as she told him of it. Now, of course, when every bit of news had to be brought by word of mouth, and by a horseman riding across country, the news of this defeat could not normally have reached Vaucouleurs within a week or ten days. Yet Joan claimed to know of it.

How did she know ?

Robert de Baudricourt waited.

The news came, and Joan was proved to have been perfectly right. She had told Robert de Baudricourt about the battle long before anybody else could possibly have known about it. This was nothing less than a miracle.

Robert de Baudricourt decided at last that she might be sent off to Chinon to see the Dauphin.

iii

In the meantime, Joan had not wasted her days. She had made two valuable friends, and I think their names deserve to be recorded, because they were two of the first people to believe in her and to risk everything on her behalf. They were two young men, called Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy; young soldiers, adventurous young men. Joan won them entirely over to her side, and while she was waiting about in Vaucouleurs for Robert de Baudricourt's decision, they busied themselves in getting a new suit of clothes for her. It was quite obvious that she couldn't ride across France dressed as a girl. Everybody would have wondered what a girl was doing, riding in the company of soldiers, by day and night, for France was an extremely dangerous country to traverse, at that moment. So they got her a page's suit of black and grey, and they raised a subscription among the citizens of Vaucouleurs to pay for what they had not been able to afford out of their own pockets. They bought a horse for her, too;

and Robert de Baudricourt gave her a sword, the first sword she had ever had. She cut her hair short so as to look more of a boy. This does not seem unusual to us, who are accustomed to women with short hair, but in those days it was a bold and decisive thing to do.

It was thus that Joan of Arc rode out of Vaucouleurs on February the 23rd, 1429, accompanied by Jean de Metz, by Bertrand de Poulengy, by their two servants and a man-at-arms called Richard the Archer, and a royal messenger called Colet de Vienne. Seven people, to cross a war-infested France, and one of them a girl.

iv

They reached Chinon eleven days later. When Joan approached Chinon, she was quite sure that she had got within reach of her goal, in other words, the Dauphin. But she was soon to discover that the Dauphin was not so readily accessible as all that. She was kept waiting for two days, while various important men came to interview her and to discover why, exactly, she had come. Of course in Joan's eyes it was all quite simple: God's saints had appeared to her with the message that she was to find the Dauphin and save France from the enemy, and that was that. Let her be taken into the Dauphin's presence as soon as she conveniently could. She had no experience of earthly kings; she didn't know how difficult it was to get near them; she only had experience of the heavenly King, who talked to her daily through the medium of His

saints. After that, an earthly king appeared to her as a mere substitute, just a regent on earth for the King of Heaven, who was King of all the world.

And when she did finally get taken to him for an audience, he tried to deceive her. He tried to pretend that somebody else was the Dauphin and not he. This was not fair on Joan, who was introduced into a great hall full of people and lighted torches—for it was late, and the room was dark, a rather bewildering experience for a girl not accustomed to the pomp and beauty of courtly life—but she was not to be deceived or confused, and walked straight up to the Dauphin, where he was hiding among the crowd of his courtiers.

Naturally, this recognition created a great impression, especially when she said firmly that she must talk to him alone, since she had things to tell him which could not be said in the hearing of anybody else. He took her apart, into an inner room, where they remained alone together for some time. Nobody knows for certain what she told him, but it was said afterwards that she had been able to read his most secret thoughts, and it was noticed by everybody that when they returned to the hall his face was completely changed and seemed irradiated by a new joy. They said he looked as though he had been visited by the Holy Ghost.

v

In spite of this, it was some time before Joan could gain her wish to be put in command of an army,

which she might lead to the relief of Orleans. She was made to undergo all kinds of examinations, at Chinon, at Poitiers, and at Tours, to all of which she submitted as patiently as she could, though naturally she was chafing and fretting at what seemed to her an unnecessary delay. They kept her waiting for nearly two months, from the first week in March to the last week in April. But although it seemed to her, in her impatience, that she was doing nothing but waste her time, actually her influence was increasing every day, and the number of her friends was growing. She had won the allegiance of the young Duke of Alençon, while still at Chinon; and another royal Prince, whom they called the Bastard of Orleans, was so much interested in her that he kept sending messages from Orleans (where he was in command) to know when he might expect her arrival. The townspeople of Tours also took her to their heart, for everybody was already beginning to regard her as the possible saviour of France. She created a great impression by sending a message back from Tours to Fierbois, where she had stayed on her way to Chinon, asking the church-people there to send her a sword which they would find buried in the ground behind the altar: to the astonishment of everybody, this sword was duly discovered exactly where Joan had said they would find it, although no one had known of its existence before. People were much more credulous in those days; their belief was much simpler, readier, and deeper; they saw nothing very unusual in the fact that a peasant girl might be sent by God to save

France. Even the Dauphin, although he hesitated—for to put her in command of an army was indeed a great responsibility—treated her with honour, lodged her as his guest, gave her a page to wait on her, and then another page, a steward, and a father-confessor all to herself, in fact a complete household. Next, she was given a suit of armour, a painted standard of white satin, and another horse. Finally, and most importantly of all, she was given an army, at the head of which she set off for Orleans on April 25th, 1429.

We have a description of that departure; we know that the priests went ahead, chanting the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, Joan's own confessor Paquerel bearing a banner in their midst; we know that Joan rode next, surrounded by celebrated captains; we know that her own brothers from Domremy had joined her by that time. Behind the priests and the captains came the long train of the troops, both mounted and on foot, conveying the four hundred cattle and the many waggons of provisions which were to be poured into the hungry town of Orleans. By the end of April it would be warm spring weather in Touraine, and the roads would already be deep in dust—especially as we must remember that there were no such things as tarred roads in those days, and that there was very little alternative between the churned mud of winter and the dust of spring and summer. We can thus imagine that as Joan and her army and her waggons pursued their way along the road which follows the wide and lovely Loire from

Blois to Orleans, a cloud of dust accompanied them, raised by the thousands of hooves of horse and cattle. But above those clouds of dust rose, symbolically, the chanting of the priests as they headed the march towards Orleans, and higher than either dust or chanting rose the hopes and faith of Joan of Arc.

*Chapter IV: Joan of Arc
Relieves Orleans*

i

By that time, the English had been besieging Orleans for six months, and owing to the shortage of food the position of the imprisoned French was becoming serious. Orleans lies on the north bank of the Loire, and the only bridge across the river was commanded by an English fort known as les Tourelles. Besides this, the English occupied a ring of forts nearly all round the city; luckily for the French, they were not quite all round, or no provisions would have been able to enter the city, nor would Joan of Arc, who was now rapidly approaching with her fresh reinforcements, have been able to enter it unopposed. Even as it is, it seems curious that the English commander, Lord Talbot, should have made no demonstration against her. She had already dictated an exceedingly haughty letter to this Lord Talbot, ordering him and all his English out of France, but apparently he refused to take her seriously, and indeed, how could an experienced soldier be expected

to think otherwise of a mere girl? The people of Orleans on the other hand believed absolutely in Joan's divine mission. They were already wild with excitement, and when they heard the accounts of her arrival on the opposite side of the river, their faith and enthusiasm doubled. For she arrived with something like a miracle to herald her. As the English held the only bridge, it was of course necessary for Joan and her friends to cross the river in boats, but a strong wind was blowing in the contrary direction. The Bastard of Orleans had come out to greet her, a gallant and attractive young man who was often able to manage Joan when other people were quite at a loss before her obstinacy and imperious temper, and on this occasion of their first meeting he gave it as his opinion that any attempt to cross the river that day was out of the question. Joan, who was tired after a long ride, in pain from the heavy and unaccustomed armour, which had bruised and hurt her, and moreover annoyed at having been brought to Orleans on what she considered as the wrong side of the river, was in no mood to accept a delay. God, she said, would change the wind. And the remarkable thing is, that the wind did change, almost as soon as she had spoken, and enabled them to cross.

ii

She entered Orleans next day, riding on a white horse, the Bastard riding beside her. It was eight o'clock in the evening, and the streets and squares of

Orleans were lit by torches carried by soldiers and by men and women of the civil population. The crowd was enormous, and was not to be prevented from surging round Joan, trying to touch her as though she had already been a saint; they reached out to touch her hands, her feet, her armour, or even her horse; they thronged so close, that a torch set fire to the fringe of her standard. In this way they escorted her with jubilation right across the city, to the house where her lodging had been arranged, and there they left her, for they realized that she was human after all, and needed rest and refreshment, with the tremendous task and heavy fighting that lay before her. They had absolute faith in her; the feeling in Orleans that night was one of hope and confidence, and still the English had made no sign. They were quiet in their dark fortresses as the night of April 29th sank upon the city.

iii

The Bastard was of the opinion that more troops must be brought into the town before a serious attack could be made upon the English, so he went off to Blois leaving Joan in Orleans with one of her most faithful companions, a hearty Gascon captain called La Hire. La Hire was fond of using strong language, which was one of the things Joan never allowed; and La Hire accepted this ruling from her, even as all her troops meekly went to church or to confession at her bidding. So truly good and pious was she

herself, that all these rough men allowed themselves to be ruled and guided by her; and as for the townspeople of Orleans, they seemed as though they could not tire of acclaiming their heroine in their streets, or of accompanying her in crowds wherever she went. So, during the Bastard's absence collecting a larger army, she spent her time riding about in a leisurely way, escorted everywhere by the enthusiastic population and sending peremptory messages to the English, warning them of the disasters about to fall on them if they did not immediately evacuate their positions round Orleans and take themselves out of France. She shot these messages into the English forts, tied on to an arrow, because she did not want to risk sending another herald who might be taken prisoner and possibly burnt. The English were contemptuously amused by these messages. They shouted back from the height of their battlements, telling the cowgirl to go back to Domremy and look after her cows. Joan burst into tears when she heard them say this, for, as I have said, she was always very ready to cry when hurt in any way, but immediately she had dried her tears she prayed to God that He might incline their hearts in the right direction. At the same time, she was not always meek, but could reply with spirit that they were nothing but liars.

The Bastard faithfully returned with a large army as he had promised, and again the English allowed them to enter Orleans unopposed. It was now clear that serious fighting would begin immediately,

and during the next few days there were various encounters in which the English lost some of their most important forts. But they still held the Tournelles, which guarded the bridge across the river. One can make quite a vivid mental picture of these mediæval battles. The defenders on their high walls rained stones and arrows on the attackers who, down in the dry ditch below, were attempting to set scaling-ladders against the walls and thus to storm the town or fortress. In order to protect themselves against the iron-tipped arrows and bolts from cross-bows, which could penetrate between the joints of armour or through the stoutest leather jerkin, and against the huge lumps of stone which came hurtling through the air, the attackers ran crouching beneath large wooden shields made from barrels sawn in half. These they carried on their backs, rather like a tortoise carries his shell, and ran forward in a stooping position, their ladders or battleaxes in their hands. The moment for hand-to-hand fighting came when the attackers, having set their ladders in position, swarmed up to the battlements and were either successful in clambering over or else were repulsed by being pushed backwards off their ladders. It must have been very noisy, confusing, and exciting. It also offered a marvellous opportunity for a display of personal valour and personal leadership. Where contact between enemy forces was so close, the sight of the leader sharing the dangers in the tumult of battle acted as a veritable encouragement and inspiration to the men;

and if this was true of the ordinary captain, what must have been the effect of a girlish figure in gleaming armour, standard in hand, always in the thick of the fight, rallying and exhorting the weary troops to the supreme attack? It was a thing they had never seen before, a marvel, a miracle, a sign from God, a spirit of victory sent amongst them. And we have instances over and over again of times when she was able to fire them to a last, successful effort just as they made their minds up to retreat.

iv

Joan, of course, had never taken part in a battle before she got to Orleans. She took part in those fights which resulted in the English losing some of their positions, but the most serious struggle of all was reserved for the last day, when the formidable *Tourelles* must be taken, and the bridge across the river wrested from the enemy. On this occasion, we have an absolutely undeniable case of Joan's gift of prophecy: she had declared, a fortnight earlier, that she would be wounded between the throat and the breast. She would be wounded, she said, but she would not die. And this is exactly what happened.

She had been fighting since early morning, and at about midday an arrow struck her precisely where she had said. Eye-witnesses record that it went into her flesh to the depth of about six inches, and that she pulled it out with her own hands—a

brave thing to do, considering that arrows in those days were barbed and had a point of iron. The fright and the pain made her cry, for she was human as well as heroic. They carried her away, and took her to a resting-place for several hours, while the battle went on without her. Most people would have given up altogether, and would have allowed themselves to be carried out of danger to a safe and comfortable bed. Not so Joan of Arc. As soon as she was able to move, she struggled to her feet and went back to the battle. We do not know exactly how long she rested, but we do know that she was fighting again during the afternoon until eight o'clock in the evening. By then the Bastard had come to the conclusion that his exhausted troops, who had been striving for thirteen hours in the heat of the sun, could not possibly carry the assault on the fort that day, and was about to order a retreat when Joan went to him. She begged him to grant her a little more time. He must have stared at her in great surprise as, tired and wounded, she stood before him, but such was his belief in her that he granted her request. Joan then went aside to pray; she remained in prayer for about a quarter of an hour, alone in a neighbouring vineyard. History tells us the rest. We know that, inspired by Joan, the French returned once more to the assault, followed the already famous standard across the ditch, flung themselves with irresistible determination against the walls, poured over the top in such numbers as to overwhelm the English, and carried

all before them. The English in a panic tried to escape by the drawbridge across the river. But in their armour they were too heavy for the drawbridge to which the French had already set fire: they had not realized that it was half burnt through. Down into the waters of the Loire went the English knights, and, unable to swim by reason of their armour, met their death by drowning. The siege of Orleans was at an end, and all the bells of the city rang out while the red flames of the burning Tourelles were reflected in the waters of the Loire, but the Maid of Orleans knelt in prayer for the souls of the English dead.

*Chapter V : Joan of Arc Crowns the
Dauphin at Rheims*

i

WHEN we remember that this was the first really shattering defeat the English had sustained since the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, we can realize what a triumph it was for Joan. The English were naturally very angry and disconcerted. They could not understand what had happened, or how; they could not deny that it was all owing to the presence of "the cowgirl," so they took refuge in attributing her strange powers and influence to Satan. The Duke of Bedford wrote home to his Government to say so, as it were officially. "This disciple and limb of the Fiend," he called her, and no doubt he really believed it. It was just as easy

for the English to believe that Joan was sent by Satan as for the French to believe that she was sent by God; and as the Duke of Bedford was himself a very God-fearing, upright man, it merely meant that he was looking at the reversed side of the medal. Such things were of very simple acceptance to that superstitious age. To the French of her own party Joan was of course already almost a saint. She had to prevent the common people from practically worshipping her, but, being a person of exceptional common sense, she kept her head under the storm of adoration and adulation which threatened to overwhelm her and protested always that she was only a girl of the people like themselves, with the single difference that God had chosen her as the mouthpiece of His Voice. Her humility was no less remarkable than her genius, and is one of the elements which go to build up her unique and in some ways contradictory character.

I say contradictory, because in spite of her humility she could also be very forceful and overbearing. We have already seen that she could go counter to the opinion of so royal and powerful a commander as the Bastard of Orleans. She was now, after the departure of the English from Orleans, to be faced with the far greater problem of getting Charles VII to move in the direction she wanted him to go. I have already hinted that Charles was a weak and cautious character, who would infinitely have preferred to be left in peace to lead a pleasant life in one or the other of his lovely castles in

Touraine, instead of being forced by the strong-minded Joan to take up his true though less pleasurable responsibilities as the rightful King of France. She arrived now from Orleans, fresh from victory, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to come with her to Rheims to be crowned in the traditional coronation place of the French kings. Charles made every excuse he could think of, and in fact managed to delay the departure for about six weeks; he pleaded, for instance, that a great many towns and strong places were still held by the English on the road to Rheims. This was true, but it was an argument to which Joan had an answer. Her answer was to take the field again, and, with the support of her faithful friends the Duke of Alençon, the Bastard of Orleans, and the Gascon La Hire, to lead the army against those towns and strong places in a campaign which was as astoundingly successful as it was brief. Within a week she had captured the towns of Jargeau and Beaugency, and had won the great battle of Patay where Lord Talbot himself was taken prisoner, and Sir John Fastolf (the original of Shakespeare's famous Falstaff) was put to flight.

Charles could scarcely, in any decency, resist her now, when she rejoined him with those new honours like fresh garlands round her name. He did indeed suggest that after her exertions she might take a rest—a suggestion which offended her so deeply that she again burst into tears—but it was becoming increasingly clear to him that he must follow his

incomprehensible saviour where she wanted him to go. And she wanted him, very urgently, to go to Rheims to be crowned. When she saw that he still hesitated she finally lost her temper and went off to camp without him in the fields. This seems to have put him to shame, for two days later he decided to follow her, and at the end of June 1429 we find them all setting off in a great train along the road to Rheims.

ii

This was the second time that Joan had ridden across France, but how different was her position now to when she had travelled from Domremy to Chinon five months earlier! *Then*, she had been an unknown girl setting out on what seemed the wildest and most improbable of adventures; *now*, she was the accepted heroine of France, the honoured companion of princes and captains, the idol of the army and the crowd, the laurelled victor of Orleans, Jargeau, Beaugency, and Patay. She was on her way to the realization of her second great ambition. The first ambition had been the relief of Orleans, the second had been the coronation of Charles VII at Rheims. The first had been accomplished, and the second was on the eve of accomplishment. At this period of her career Joan seems to have been filled by such a conviction of her own infallibility that nothing and no one could resist her. All the towns that she and Charles had to pass on their way to Rheims

yielded almost as soon as the Maid of Orleans summoned them. There was no fighting at all. Auxerre, Troyes, Chalons, either let them pass unmolested or received them hospitably within their walls. Finally, Rheims itself prepared a magnificent welcome for the uncrowned King and his miraculous Maid. As soon as the news was received that Charles had arrived within a few miles of the city on his way to his coronation, the citizens of Rheims hurriedly turned to making every suitable preparation for the ceremony in their historic cathedral. It is on record that the blows of hammers and of mallets resounded all night, while the moon rode full over the narrow streets of mediæval Rheims. The cathedral, which was to be so cruelly bombarded during the Great War of 1914-18, was then at the height of its beauty: the stained-glass windows blazed in the sunlight, and gorgeous tapestries covered the stern walls. The silks and velvets of the nobles, the vestments of the Archbishop and his clergy, the strange pointed head-dresses and floating veils of the ladies, the pikes and halberds of the men-at-arms, the gaily coloured throng of citizens, must all have composed a scene of brilliant picturesqueness in the great cathedral on that morning of July 17th, 1429, and as the crown of France was set upon the head of the kneeling King by the Archbishop of Rheims, all eyes were turned towards a figure such as had never been seen at such a ceremony before: the figure of a girl in armour standing beside the throne, a white and golden standard in her hand.

Part II

Chapter VI: The Failure and Capture of Joan of Arc

i

UP till now, all has been triumph, and the petty delays and irritations have all been forgotten in the culmination at Rheims. Joan had had her personal happiness, too, for her father had travelled to Rheims and she had received his forgiveness. Unluckily there is nothing to tell us what he thought when he saw his daughter, whom he had last seen in her shabby red frock at Domremy, now standing in that place of honour above all the greatest nobles of France, but in the absence of any written record it is not difficult to imagine the emotion they must both have felt. They could not spend very long together, however, for Joan must follow in the train of the King; the affairs of France still claimed her. It had been agreed that after the coronation they should march straight on Paris, which lay wholly in the power of the English and the Burgundians. Of course this plan to reduce the capital to obedience was the obvious and sensible course to pursue, and Joan in her innocence fully believed that Charles VII intended to pursue it. She had not yet learned the full depths of Charles's cowardice and duplicity. Indeed, from this moment onwards, the story of Joan

becomes one of increasing tragedy, with only an occasional ray to lighten its gloom. It was not long before she discovered that the King, behind her back, had arranged a truce with the Duke of Burgundy for fifteen days, by which the Duke agreed to deliver Paris into the King's hands at the end of that time. Joan, with her direct common sense, saw at once that the Duke had no intention of ever doing anything of the sort, but merely wanted to gain time for his allies, the English. She exclaimed in despair that no peace with Burgundy would ever be gained save at the point of the lance. How right she was, was soon proved when the fifteen days came to an end, and Paris was still no nearer submission than it had been before. At last, and very reluctantly, Charles allowed her and her friend the Duke of Alençon to attack. But the attack on Paris proved a complete failure, the first real failure the army had ever met with since Joan took command. It was in vain that she threw herself forward as she had done at Orleans, in vain that she was again wounded by an arrow: something of the first magic seemed to have gone out of her leadership. Charles, I fancy, was not altogether sorry. Furtively he did everything he could to thwart the plans of Joan and d'Alençon, even to the extent of causing a bridge they had built to be secretly destroyed by night. Unkindest blow of all, he listened to the counsels of those false friends, the Archbishop of Rheims and the Duke de la Tremoille, that Joan and d'Alençon should be parted, and never allowed to see each other again. There is a very

pathetic passage in a contemporary historian, which says, "And thus the Maid remained with the King, much saddened by the departure of the Duke of Alençon, whom she greatly loved and for whom she would do things she would never have done for any other."

ii

Charles kept her hanging about the Court. He kept her idle for eight whole weary months, with one brief unsuccessful expedition to break them. This expedition took her to St. Pierre-le-Moutier, where a momentary success encouraged her, and then to La Charité where the harshness of the winter and the lack of money and supplies forced her to abandon the siege and to return to the hated life of the Court. Something of her glamour seemed to have left her, and it is a sad disheartened figure that we have to contemplate, compared with the gallant and irresistible Maid of her early days. The King ennobled her and all her family, but it was not ennoblement that Joan wanted. She had never coveted earthly honours or wealth for herself. What she wanted was to see her King a sovereign in something more than name. That King, meanwhile, wasted her time and his own in a series of empty truces, for it seemed that he never could learn that the Duke of Burgundy's promises were not to be trusted.

At last, by the end of March 1430, it became

apparent even to Charles VII that some more definite action must be taken if he was ever to regain his kingdom, and Joan was allowed to depart with a small army. She had none of her old friends with her, but at least she was a soldier again, and a soldier on active service. The town of Melun gave itself up to her of its own accord, and at first it seemed as though her first series of dazzling victories was about to be repeated. But it was at Melun, standing on its ramparts, that the voices of St. Catherine and St. Margaret spoke to her with words that dashed all hope from her heart. She would be taken prisoner, they said, before the Feast of St. John at midsummer; this thing was ordained, they said; she must not be surprised, they said, but must trust in the help of God.

Joan, who had never doubted her Voices, could not doubt their prophecy now. They had never deceived her in prosperity; she had no reason to think that they would deceive her in adversity either. It is the greatest tribute to her courage and determination that she should have struggled on with this certainty of defeat ahead of her. She prayed earnestly that she might die when she was captured; she prayed also to be told exactly when the capture would take place. To neither of these prayers could she obtain any answer, only a repetition that it had to be, and that she must trust in God. We know that she did trust in God, and did continue to do her duty to the end.

iii

For a month she waited with this threat hanging over her. That month, fortunately for her, was fully occupied with actual fighting and with considerations of future strategy. The strategy centred in the town of Compiègne which, perfectly loyal to Charles VII, was now threatened by both the English and the Burgundians. Compiègne is not very far from Paris, and therefore was an important position for any army wishing to command the capital. It was most important that Compiègne should not fall into English or Burgundian hands. Joan, on hearing that the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of Burgundy had arrived to take up their positions with a view to attacking Compiègne, immediately decided to go and examine the situation for herself. With a few faithful followers, she rode through the thick woods all night, reaching Compiègne at dawn. They rested during the day, and at five o'clock that evening rode out to engage in what was meant to be a mere skirmish with an outpost of Burgundian troops just across the river Oise. It was meant to be a skirmish such as Joan had taken part in many times, and she probably thought little of it, for in spite of the warning of her Voices she was still utterly fearless so far as her personal safety was concerned. But on this occasion the luck was all against her. The skirmish was observed from the height of a cliff by some Burgundian gentlemen, who, hastily giving the alarm, caused reinforcements to be brought up from

another camp. The governor of Compiègne, fearing an invasion of his town by the enemy, gave orders for the drawbridge to be raised and the gates to be closed. This meant that all retreat was cut off from Joan and her little band; it meant that they saw themselves outnumbered and surrounded. It was Joan's last fight, and her most desperate. Most of her followers had already abandoned her: some had fled for safety back into Compiègne before the gates were closed, others had plunged into the river and were either swimming for their lives or had clambered into boats and were rowing away with no thought but of saving their own skins. Joan, characteristically, thought less of herself than of protecting the escape of these fugitives. Supported only by a faithful few, amongst whom were her steward, Jean d'Aulon, his brother, and her own brother, Pierre d'Arc, she fought on magnificently to defend their rear. But this mere handful stood no chance against the hordes of English and Burgundians who surged around them. What did the English and Burgundians care for the cowardly runaways, when so much richer a booty lay within their grasp? Everybody was struggling to be the first to lay his hands on that supreme prize, the famous invincible Maid. Finally a poor archer seized her cloak and dragged her from her horse, and the news ran through the Burgundian host: Joan of Arc is our prisoner.

Part III

Chapter VII: Joan of Arc a Prisoner

i

ALTHOUGH the actual capture had been effected by the archer, Joan was technically the prisoner of the archer's superior officer, Jean de Luxembourg, Count of Ligny, himself a follower of the Duke of Burgundy. She was immediately taken to Jean de Luxembourg's quarters, where the great Duke of Burgundy came in person to visit her. These two mighty enemies—mighty each in their different way—had never previously met face to face, and no record exists of what they then said to one another. From what we know of Joan's character, however, we can well imagine that even as a prisoner she would not humble herself before so high a prince. We may be sure that she kept her courage, although her common sense must have told her that only the blackest future could await her. Utterly deserted by her friends, except by her faithful d'Aulon, who had been taken prisoner at the same time, and whom she was allowed to retain to serve her, she was completely in the power of her direst enemies. For a time, Jean de Luxembourg locked her up in his castle of Beaulieu; then, after she had made an attempt to escape, he took her away to another castle called

Beaurevoir, where he placed her in the charge of his aunt and his wife. These ladies of Luxembourg were kind to Joan, and she grew to be genuinely fond of them, but naturally she could not forget that she was a prisoner and that France was still undelivered from the foreigner. So greatly did these things prey on her mind that she determined on the wild idea of flinging herself down from the top of the castle tower, a height of sixty or seventy feet. Being Joan, with her profound belief in the guidance of her Voices, she of course consulted them before venturing on so desperate a step, but to her dismay they forbade it. We may judge what an unhappy state of mind she was in, when we discover that for the first time she resolved to disobey their counsel and, commending her soul to God, flung herself from the battlements to the ground beneath.

Strange to say, she did not hurt herself. She was picked up unconscious, but without any physical injury, and within a day or two was as well as ever. It is one of the things which no one has ever been able to explain, and which really wears an appearance of the miraculous when we consider the enormous height from which she had fallen. The leap of Beaurevoir remains one of the mysteries of her whole mysterious career.

ii

A popular and ignorant idea exists that Joan of Arc was taken prisoner by the English and was

eventually burnt by them. This idea is only half true. It is true in so far as the English were certainly determined to see her put to death, and did everything they could towards this end; but it is untrue in so far as it suggests that she was ever officially their prisoner. She was not. She was the prisoner of the Burgundians, who were, in a sense, her own countrymen, even though they were opposed to the interests of her own King. Anybody who wants to understand the exact position of Joan of Arc as a prisoner must take a little trouble to grasp the details of the situation. They are not really so very complicated, but they seem to have given rise to a great deal of misunderstanding, and to have brought a great deal of blame on the English, which they only half deserved. In order to arrive at the real truth, we have got to take these facts into consideration: first, that Joan was officially the prisoner of Jean de Luxembourg, a Burgundian; second, that Jean de Luxembourg was compelled, by the rules of the day, to sell his prisoner for a reasonable sum if his feudal superior, the Duke of Burgundy, commanded him to do so; third, that the Duke of Burgundy was the ally of the King of England; and, fourth, that Joan had been captured within the diocese of the Bishop of Beauvais, thus giving the Bishop of Beauvais the right to claim her for her trial. It thus became inevitable that the Duke of Burgundy, in the name of the King of England, should compel Jean de Luxembourg to deliver Joan into the hands of the Bishop of Beauvais. Jean de Luxembourg was not very reluctant

to do so: he was poor, and the price offered for Joan was enormous. There were long discussions and many delays, but finally the money was paid over and Joan passed into the power of the Bishop of Beauvais.

This meant, virtually, that she passed into the power of the Catholic Church and of the English. But this, again, is not quite the exact truth, although it is usually believed that the Church and the English between them condemned her. It is not the exact truth, because although the Bishop of Beauvais was a high dignitary of the Church, he by no means represented *all* the Church; and although the English supported him in the background, and even urged and threatened him whenever he seemed to weaken in favour of the prisoner, they were in no way officially concerned in the trial of Joan. This may seem strange, when we know that the money paid for her was English money, raised in the Duchy of Normandy, and when we reflect that Joan had been fighting against the English as the most dangerous enemy that had ever arisen against them since the beginning of the Hundred Years' War. The explanation is, that Joan was to be tried on religious and not on political charges, and therefore by a court composed of representatives of the Church and the University of Paris, not an English court. They meant to try her on charges of witchcraft, sacrilege, and heresy, not on the charge of having tried to turn the English out of France.

*Chapter VIII: The Trial of
Joan of Arc*

i

IN November 1430 she was removed by stages from Beaurevoir to the castle of Crotoy, which overlooked the English Channel; this was the first time she had ever seen the sea, and she must have stared wistfully out between her prison windows, wondering whether she would catch a glimpse of the faint outline of the English coast. Of course she couldn't; the Channel was too wide at that point; but Joan's ideas of geography were necessarily vague.

Then, last stage of all, she was taken to Rouen and thrown into a cell in a circular tower which to-day is known as the Tour Jeanne d'Arc.

This was in December 1430.

Here she was kept, loaded with irons, under the charge of five of the roughest English soldiers, while the Church and the University of Paris made ready for her trial. Day and night the soldiers watched her. Her ankles were chained, and for additional security the chains were fastened to a wooden beam. Some people said that for a time at any rate she was locked into an iron cage, but I do not believe that to be true. She had quite enough to suffer without that. There is no doubt that she was miserably badly treated during the long months of her imprisonment at Rouen. The English soldiers bullied and mocked at her; she was never allowed to

go to confession or to hear Mass, which for a pious Catholic like Joan was perhaps the most terrible deprivation she could be made to endure; and furthermore two of the Frenchmen who were to sit in judgment on her, played the mean trick of introducing themselves into her cell and of trying to gain her confidence by pretending to be prisoners like herself, and, like herself, natives of her own Lorraine. It is no wonder that a kindly monk left it on record that he had seen her "in great distress, her face wet with tears, so disfigured and outraged that I was filled with pity and compassion."

But for all this they could not break her spirit. In one of the most detailed and remarkable historical documents that has been preserved for hundreds of years, we have the full account of Joan of Arc's trial day by day, with all the judges' questions and all the prisoner's answers. These words, taken down from her own lips by the clerks of the court, give us more insight into Joan's character than any amount of reconstruction by the most skilled historian. In them, we see her courage, her obstinacy, her impassioned piety, her absolute belief in God; yes, and her peasant shrewdness and her quick temper, too. She was utterly unabashed as she stood alone and undefended before that tribunal of learned men—there were nearly a hundred and sixty of them, and they included high dignitaries of the Church, an assembly learned and solemn enough to terrify any captive summoned before them, let alone a poor ignorant girl from Lorraine, who could neither

read nor write, and who had nothing but her faith and her victories to sustain her. Yet, day after day, she faced them. Still in her boy's dress, which she refused to give up, she was brought before them; she was cross-examined for hours on end; she was tired, she was ill—so ill, that at one moment they feared she might die and thus escape them—she was threatened with torture and was even taken to the threshold of the torture-chamber to be shown the rack and the executioners waiting; yet they could induce her to take no oath she did not want to take, and could induce her to make no admission she did not want to make. At moments, she could even joke with them, telling the clerk of the court that she would pull his ears if he made a mistake again. (She had just caught him out in making one.) At other moments she would admonish the great Bishop of Beauvais himself, saying, "Be very careful not to judge me wrongly, for you would be putting yourself in grave danger. I am warning you of it now, so that if Our Lord punishes you for it I shall have done my duty in telling you." We can imagine the Bishop's surprise at hearing himself treated in this high-handed way by this slip of a girl in her shabby boyish clothes.

On the whole he showed considerable patience towards her, though it was quite clear from the first that on some pretext or other they intended to condemn her, if not to death, then at least to lifelong imprisonment. She was much too wild a danger to be left loose and free. One very often hears it

discussed whether Joan was given a fair trial or not, and this is one of the questions where it is most necessary to preserve an impartial attitude of mind. No national or religious indignation must be allowed to prejudice our judgment. We must not, if we happen to be English, decide that Joan deserved all she got for having tried to turn the English out of France; nor, if we happen to be French, decide that the English behaved like brutes in ridding themselves of France's national heroine. We must not, if we happen to be Catholics, condemn the Bishop of Beauvais and his colleagues for having put a saint to death; nor, if we happen to be non-Catholics, must we deride members of that Church for having committed so terrible and criminal a blunder. On the one hand, the English very naturally wanted their most dangerous enemy out of the way, not forgetting either that they believed her to be inspired by the Devil; on the other hand, the Churchmen thought it their duty to determine whether her voices came indeed from God or whether they were in fact a proof that she was nothing but a sorceress and a blasphemer. It is a little difficult for us nowadays to understand the fear deeply rooted in men to whom witchcraft and the Powers of Evil were very living forces, but if we can make the effort to transport ourselves for a moment into their mentality we shall understand that if Joan, according to their lights, were to be proved an enemy of God and His Church, there was no choice for them but to put her to death as speedily as might be. We now know,

of course, that Joan was the very incarnation of purity and piety, a single-minded creature inspired only by the highest ideals, but to the Churchmen of her own day she could equally easily appear as a wrong-headed, arrogant, rebellious and blasphemous witch. If the Churchmen really regarded her in this light, as they undoubtedly did, we cannot reasonably blame them for the verdict they brought against her.

It must also be said, in their defence, that Joan herself did nothing to make the path of mercy easier for them. She would make no concessions whatsoever; she would not even promise to tell them all she knew. Frequently she refused to answer their questions, and her reply, "Pass over that," occurs repeatedly, and sometimes "That has nothing to do with the case." Nothing would induce her to say otherwise than that she was the direct envoy of God, or that He spoke to her through the medium of His Saints. While admitting the authority of the Church, she still maintained herself to be under the higher authority of God Himself. Even when bribed by the promise that she should be allowed to hear Mass if she would only consent to resume woman's dress, she refused steadfastly to discard her boy's suit.

Two or three members of the tribunal were evidently sorry for her and tried to give her good advice, but this was instantly suppressed by the Bishop of Beauvais. The Bishop himself was in no very easy position, for the English, who were jealously watching

all the time, were quick to grow angry whenever they suspected him of any weakening in favour of the prisoner. Lord Warwick frankly told the doctors that on no account must she be allowed to die a natural death. "She must die only at the hands of justice," he said to them, "and must be burnt." His alarm was not without foundation, for after the trial had lasted four or five days Joan fell ill. Characteristically, she did not hesitate to blame the Bishop of Beauvais and accused him of having sent her a carp with the intent to poison her. No doubt her wish to die was as great as their anxiety to save her for the stake, but this merciful escape was not to be allowed her. She had the strong constitution of a healthy peasant, and soon recovered sufficiently for the sittings to be resumed. It appears, however, that they took advantage of her enfeebled state to hold the sittings in her prison cell, instead of in the great hall of the castle: this meant that only a handful of her judges could attend at a time, and it is not surprising to find that that handful was normally composed of her most determined enemies. The strain of this examination on Joan's endurance must have been tremendous. Worn out as she was by captivity, privation, natural terror, and now by illness, she had to face her remorseless judges daily, sometimes twice a day, with no one to aid or advise her, no friend, no counsel, no lawyer for the defence, no witnesses on her behalf, abandoned by her King, quite alone, an ignorant girl pitting her wits against the most trained and subtle brains of the Church

and the University of Paris. Her utter honesty, simplicity, and integrity shine like jewels in the darkness of that prison cell. For all their cleverness and insistence they could not succeed in shaking her, and the more they insisted the more she condemned herself with every stubborn answer that she gave. Finally, their case was complete, and they withdrew to compose the appalling Act of Accusation which should proclaim Joan of Arc a heretic, a sorceress, an idolatress, and a blasphemer.

ii

The proceedings were shortly interrupted again, for she once more fell ill, and this time seriously believed herself to be dying. They waited until she had again recovered, and on May 8th, the anniversary of the day when two years earlier she had watched the defeated English take their departure from Orleans, they took her to the torture-chamber to show her the executioners waiting beside their devilish instruments. But even now, her spirit was not broken. Ill as she was, she turned on them. "Truly," she said, "even if you were to tear my limbs asunder and rive my soul out of my body, I could not speak otherwise; and if I did say anything, I should always say afterwards that you had forced me to it."

To the credit of her judges, it must be said that she escaped the torture because only three voices were in favour of putting her to it. It was then decided that a final exhortation should be addressed

to her in public before actually delivering sentence upon her. Accordingly, she was taken out to the public square near the church of St. Ouen, and made to stand on a sort of platform in full view of the populace, with the Bishop of Beauvais and the English Cardinal of Winchester surrounded by dignitaries on another platform opposite to her, while one of the doctors-in-theology delivered himself of a sermon. She listened quietly at first, and only when he began to abuse her King did she interrupt him with indignant protests, but they silenced her and she was obliged to hear him to the end. Then the Bishop of Beauvais rose solemnly in all the magnificence of his ecclesiastical robes, and the terrible words of the final sentence began rolling from his lips. Joan gazed wildly round; her eyes fell upon the greedy, upturned faces of the crowd, upon the hard faces of the English lords, the shrewd bitter faces of the lawyers, upon the sinister figure of the executioner waiting for her beside his cart, and for the first time her courage failed her. Interrupting the Bishop, she cried out that she would give way. She would obey the Church and her judges. She would acknowledge that her Voices had deceived her. She would, in fact, recant.

Quick as thought, a secretary whipped a sheet of paper out of his sleeve and presented it to Joan with a pen to sign. It was the recantation which they had been keeping in readiness for her. And as she signed, a great uproar broke out, the English shouting that the witch was being allowed to escape them; stones

were thrown, and the Bishop of Beauvais after an angry altercation with an English Churchman flung his papers on the ground saying that he would have no more to do with it that day. The Cardinal of Winchester had to pacify him as best he could. Exposed to every insult from the English, Joan was hustled away back to her prison; her head was shaved, her boy's dress taken from her, and a woman's dress given her in its place. For the moment it seemed as though she had indeed saved her life at the price of all she held most sacred.

iii

But I have drawn a poor picture of Joan of Arc if anyone can imagine that she would remain satisfied with this arrangement for long. She had had her hour of panic, her hour of human fear; an hour which perhaps makes her more human and lovable than all her heroism; she needed only the chance to recover herself for her superb spirit to reassert itself. It was not very long before word was brought to the Bishop of Beauvais that his prisoner had resumed her boy's dress. Rightly interpreting this as a sign of fresh rebellion, he sent some of his minions to see her, and finally went in person to find out what it was all about. He took a clerk with him as usual to record the prisoner's words, and in the crabbed handwriting of the mediæval Latin words we can still read what that clerk wrote down: "I took it (the dress) of my own free will. No one obliged me to take it.

I prefer to dress as a man than as a woman. I resumed it because you did not keep your word to me, that I should go to Mass and receive my Saviour and be taken out of irons. . . . They [St. Catherine and St. Margaret] told me that God sent me His pity through them of the betrayal to which I consented to save my life, and that in saving my life I was damning myself. If I were to say that God had not sent me I should be damning myself, for it is true that God did send me. My Voices have told me since then that I did wrong in doing that which I did (in denying her Voices and her mission) and that I must confess that I was wrong. It was fear of the fire which made me say that which I said."

The clerk wrote the words "Fatal answer" in the margin.

Chapter IX : The Death of Joan of Arc

i

"FATAL answer." It was indeed. They might now argue that Joan had been given chance after chance and had deliberately thrown them away. After all these months—the trial had begun in February¹ and it was now nearly the end of May—she was still persisting in her old contention that she regarded herself as the envoy of God. And if that was not

¹ Actually the preliminaries of the trial began in January, but Joan was not summoned to appear before the judges until February.

blasphemy, what was? One cannot help an uncomfortable feeling that the judges were rather pleased on finding that Joan, so to speak, was thus sending herself to the stake of her own accord. They could comfort their consciences with the self-righteous argument, "Well, we did everything to help the girl; we even persuaded her to abjure her evil ways; if she persists in them, how can she or anyone else blame us for the logical consequences?" By this and similar arguments, they could comfort their consciences and could also please their friends the English who desired one thing and one thing only: to see the dangerous Maid safely out of the way.

There was a very easy path open to the Bishop of Beauvais and his colleagues of the Church. They had no need to condemn Joan to the stake themselves, and indeed the Church had always declared itself opposed to the shedding of human blood or the taking of human life. They had only to declare her excommunicated, which meant that she passed beyond the authority of the Church into the authority of secular (meaning worldly) law.

This, accordingly, was what they now proposed to do.

ii

Joan was formally summoned to present herself in the Old Market Place of Rouen at eight o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, May 30th, 1431, in

order to hear herself publicly declared an outlaw with no further claim upon the protection or judgment of the Church. They sent a monk named Ladvenu to her prison cell, early in the morning, to hear her last confession, to administer the last Sacraments and also to prepare her for what she must expect. By a specially cruel turn of fortune, death by fire was what she had always most dreaded, and now when she had heard the monk's dreadful words she broke down and wept, crying, "Alas, that I should be treated so horribly and cruelly, and that my whole body should be consumed and burnt to ashes! I would rather be beheaded seven times, than thus be burnt." Still, no idea of denying her convictions again seems to have entered her mind. The Bishop of Beauvais came in, and surely even that hardened man must have been moved by her last reproach: "Bishop, I die through you." Another of her judges came in, who had once been kind to her, and she turned to him: "Maître Pierre, where shall I be to-night? God willing, I shall be in Paradise."

She allowed them to lead her out and to take her down to the courtyard, where a noisy crowd of English soldiers surrounded her, armed with swords and sticks and axes. The monk Ladvenu and another monk went with her as she was taken in a cart through the hostile streets to the market-place. Here, an enormous crowd had assembled; witnesses say that a thousand English soldiers were there, and ten thousand citizens of Rouen. Whatever the numbers actually were, it is clear that a great mob of

people filled the market-place on that early summer morning; and, because crowds are well known to be collectively more heartless than any individual amongst them, we may take it that curiosity rather than pity pervaded the market-place while the death-cart was known to be approaching with its sacrilegious burden. The crowd had plenty to look at while they waited. Three platforms had been built, one for the judges, one for the priests, and the third for the stake already piled with faggots and wood. On the front of this platform hung a board on which the following words were painted in large letters: "Jeanne, who called herself the Maid, liar, deceiver of the people, sorceress, superstitious, blasphemer of God, presumptuous, disbeliever in the faith of Jesus Christ, boastful, idolatrous, cruel, dissolute, invoker of devils, apostate, schismatic, and heretic."¹

The victim of these terrific epithets now appeared, sitting in the cart, dressed in a long grey robe. She must have looked very young and pitiful, but she was perfectly calm and self-possessed, and listened very quietly to a long address delivered by a Canon of Rouen, called Nicolas Midi. Only when he came to the words, "Jeanne, go in peace, the Church can no longer protect you, and delivers you into secular hands," did she fall on her knees and pray to God,

¹ Apostate means "one who has abandoned his, or her, religion"; schismatic means "one who tries to divide the Church by holding different opinions"; heretic means "one who does not agree with the religious teachings of the Church."

declaring that she forgave her enemies all the harm they had done her. It was observed that the judges were in tears, and even some of the English, and that some of those who had been concerned in her trial left the market-place weeping, for they could not bear the sight which was to follow. She asked for a cross, and an English soldier hastily made her one out of two pieces of wood, which she kissed and then put over her heart between her flesh and her gown. The two monks were still beside her, whispering such comfort as they could.

After half an hour of her prayers the English began to grow impatient and called out rudely to the Bishop of Beauvais, "Well, priest, do you mean us to dine here?" The Bishop had no choice but to rise in his place and read aloud the final sentence of excommunication. The bailiff of Rouen, whose prisoner she now was, made a gesture with his hand, saying, "Away with her." Then the English, who had been longing for this moment, laid hands upon her and hoisted her roughly upon the scaffold, setting a tall paper cap on her head on which they had scrawled the words, "Heretic, relapsed, apostate, idolatress." One of the monks fetched a crucifix from a neighbouring church and held it up before her. As she was being bound to the stake she loudly called upon St. Michael, St. Margaret and St. Catherine, which made some of the English laugh in derision. "Ah, Rouen," she cried also, "I am much afraid that you may have to suffer for my death." But the flames were already rising round her, and it

was to the name of Jesus that they saw her head droop forward as she died.

A great terror and emotion overspread the crowd. Men wept openly, and the secretary of the King of England expressed the general feeling when he exclaimed, "We are lost; we have burnt a saint." Fantastic stories instantly sprang up: it was said that the word "Jesus" had been seen written across the flames, and an English soldier declared he had seen a white dove fly out of the flames, to fly away towards Paris. The executioner himself was terribly frightened, saying that he was damned, having burnt a saint, and that God would never forgive him. The English, however, kept their heads sufficiently to order him to show the people her blackened body hanging on the stake, for they feared that some story of her escape might spread. The executioner said afterwards that in spite of all the oil and sulphur he had used, he could not burn her heart to ashes. He had therefore thrown all that was mortal of Joan of Arc into the Seine.

Part IV

Chapter X: The Rehabilitation of Joan of Arc

i

THAT was on May 30th, 1431. On May 16th, 1920, nearly five hundred years later, a very different scene was in progress, though not in the same place. In the vast and rich cathedral of St. Peter's in Rome an enormous crowd, greater than that which had thronged the market-place at Rouen (for pilgrims from all parts of Europe had come to Rome), awaited in an atmosphere of the profoundest feeling and reverence some significant event which was to stir the Catholic Church to its depths. Those who had not been able to find room within the church, pressed forward on the great sunlit square outside, anxious to take part if only by catching some rolling notes of the organ or some puff of incense wafted out by the stirring of the heavy leather curtain across the door. Within the church, the light of a thousand tapers reflected in the twists of the fat gold columns and in the gilding of frames and cornices; shedding their soft yellow glow over the scarlet robes of the assembled cardinals, on the rich vestments of the priests, and on the lacy surplices of choristers and acolytes. Any uninformed stranger making his way into this feast of pomp, colour, and magnificence,

might well have inquired in whose honour this preparation had been made, sufficient to bring the Pope in person to his throne and those thousands of black-clothed pilgrims from the humblest or most splendid homes. He would then have learnt that it was all to the glory of a peasant girl, who had been condemned as a heretic and burnt as a witch, five hundred years before.

Thus with all honour and with all the display of its boundless resources the Catholic Church made its reparation to Joan of Arc, placing her by this superb ceremony in the calendar of its Saints. She, who had listened with dread and fearful love to the voices of saints in her father's garden, in the moats of Orleans, on the ramparts of Melun, in the prison at Rouen, was now enrolled among their number, a saint herself. Everywhere in France the little village churches set up their statue of Ste Jeanne; in the public places of France, in Paris, in Orleans, in Rouen itself, imposing monuments portrayed her in sculpture astride her charger, her standard in her hand; streets were called after her, museums collected any relic they could find; books were written about her; the evidence of her trial was studied, and scholars devoted volumes to every minor point. Most ironical of all, English flags appeared beside the French flag in churches, inscribed to her immortal and heroic memory.

ii

To tell the truth, this transformation of Joan from the disgraced heretic into the canonized saint had not been quite so sudden as I have perhaps made it appear. The attempt to bring about what is called her Rehabilitation began only nine years after her death, when her mother boldly demanded a reconsideration of the case and even travelled to Paris in order to present her appeal in person in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. She was an elderly woman by then, her husband had died of grief (it was said) shortly after their daughter, and it must have required a great effort of courage on her part to appear personally in Paris so far from her own province of Lorraine. Fortunately, she met with a measure of success, and by 1450 we find the examination of the witnesses begun. This examination, with intervals, was continued in 1452 and again in 1455 and 1456. To it we owe the vast amount of detail we know about Joan, for it included not only the examination of men who had watched her throughout her trial, but also of those who had ridden with her on her campaigns, men such as Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy who had been among the first to believe in her, and the brave Bastard of Orleans and the gay young Duke of Alençon; her own servitors, too, the little page Louis de Contes, her faithful steward d'Aulon, her confessor Paquerel, and many many others too numerous to mention, who all came forward to testify to the absolute purity and sincerity of the

Maid. These numerous witnesses were strongly reinforced by her own childhood friends and neighbours from Domremy, some of whom were by now very old, but who were all very ready to declare that they could well remember Jeannette as the most pious and devout little daughter of pious and devout parents. How much better it would have been for Joan, and how much more difficult it would have made things for her judges, if only all these witnesses could have been called in her defence while her trial was going on, instead of waiting until her charred remains had lain for years washed to and fro by the waters of the Seine! However, there it was, and the only thing Pope Calixtus III could do was to cancel her sentence in July 1456. It was a bit late, certainly, but at any rate the name of Joan of Arc was cleared, even if her poor burnt body could not be restored. After that first recognition that the sinner might not have been a sinner at all, but something very much the reverse, matters were allowed to rest, officially, until 1903. It was then that a formal request for her canonization was entered; in 1904 she was granted the title of Venerable by Pope Pius X, beatified (which means that she was granted the title of Blessed) in 1909, and finally canonized, as we have seen, by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

iii

Meanwhile, what was Charles VII about, thus to have deserted the girl who had done everything for

him ? It is not to be denied that he had made absolutely no attempt to rescue her, but had abandoned her entirely to the vengeance of her enemies and his. For this, he has been often, and rightly, blamed. If he had had a spark of nobility in him, he would have tried to save her either by paying a higher ransom, or by exchanging some high-born prisoner for her (for instance, he still held Lord Talbot as a captive), or by force of arms. I do not suggest for a moment that any of these expedients would have met with success, even if Charles could have afforded them ; but I do suggest that in this case the unwise, chivalrous action would have done much to redeem the reputation of Charles VII in the judgment of posterity. As it is, his name leaves us with a feeling of contempt which no amount of fairness or tolerance can wholly abolish.

And meanwhile, again, what did the achievement of St. Joan really amount to ? Had she accomplished all her promises, or not ? What lasting effect had that overwhelming personality, that divinely inspired ignoramus, made on the fortunes of Europe ? If Joan of Arc had never lived, what would have happened to France and England ? In what position should we respectively find ourselves in to-day ? All these are very important points to be considered by anyone who wants to arrive at a true estimate of her influence on history.

The only way of getting the answers to these points clear in our minds is to take them one by one. Had she accomplished all her promises or not ? In one

sense she had, in another sense she had not. She had promised—or perhaps we should call it prophesied—four things: that the English would be destroyed after the siege of Orleans had been raised; that Charles would be crowned at Rheims; that Paris would return to obedience; and that the captive Duke of Orleans would return from England to France.

Now, of these four prophecies it might be said that only one and a half had been fulfilled at the time of Joan's death. Charles had indeed been crowned at Rheims, and the siege of Orleans had indeed been raised, but it could not be contended that the English had been either destroyed or turned out of France. Their power had certainly been weakened, and their confidence diminished, but even Joan's most ardent supporters could not pretend that they had been driven across the sea back to their own country. The English, at Joan's death, still seemed to be as firmly established in France as ever they had been. On the face of it, therefore, it looked as though Joan's mission had been almost in vain, and her death a mere useless martyrdom. Her other two promises had singularly failed to find fulfilment. Paris had not returned to obedience to its rightful King, nor had the Duke of Orleans been released from his captivity in England. Thus far, it might seem that Joan had failed and thus, no doubt, it appeared to her contemporaries. But to us, looking backwards, with all the knowledge that neither Joan nor her contemporaries could enjoy, how does it

appear ? Joan herself could have no knowledge of historical facts later than 1431 when she called for the last time on the name of Jesus at the stake in Rouen. Her contemporaries, who were so fortunate as to survive her by a varying number of years, could still not look back over history from the same point of view as we can. They could not realize that the English defeat at Orleans was really the turning-point of the whole Hundred Years' War; that the battle of Patay counted as one of the first major defeats of the English in the open field. They could not be expected to see that Joan had arrived at precisely the right moment to take charge of affairs; at precisely the moment when the English were becoming discouraged by this long-drawn-out war, which had degenerated into a sort of stalemate between both parties. Joan's contemporaries could scarcely be expected to realize that she had arrived from Domremy at precisely the moment when she was most needed. They could scarcely be expected to realize that she had, in effect, broken the spell which the English had laid over the French for nearly a hundred years, although some of her own promises were not to be fulfilled for some time after her own death. It requires the perspective of history to enable us to appreciate these things at their right value. Joan's contemporaries could not appreciate them as we can; which reflection may perhaps allow us to make further excuses for the apparently inexcusable behaviour of Charles VII.

iv

It was not very long before her two remaining prophecies came true also. In 1436, five years after her death, Paris opened its gates to Charles, and in 1441 an exchange of prisoners was arranged, by which the Duke of Orleans was restored to France.¹ There were several reasons why the power of the English was becoming so weakened as to enable Charles to gain Paris. For one thing the Dukes of Bedford and Burgundy had quarrelled on personal grounds, which led to the dissolution of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance; for another thing Charles's evil counsellor La Trémoille was overthrown and the more energetic Constable of Richemont took his place. Burgundy, owing to the split with England, began to draw nearer to Charles, and in 1435 the definite treaty of Arras was arranged between them. Signed a week after the death of the Duke of Bedford, it left Charles with a powerful ally, his most determined enemy out of the way, and the almost inevitable submission of the Parisians, who had never loved Bedford and who had always been avowedly Burgundians.

Even after this readjustment of affairs, the war dragged on for another seventeen years. As might have been expected, the alliance between Charles VII and the Duke of Burgundy was short-lived, and came to an end four years after it had been arranged. But now again Charles's luck revived, for in many

¹ This was the poet-duke, Charles, who had been held a prisoner by the English ever since the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

ways he was among the most fortunate of kings, in so far as some able and devoted servitor seemed always to arise at the critical moment to redeem the consequences of his own languor and folly. Joan of Arc had been such a servitor, and now he had the Constable of Richemont and Joan's friend the Bastard of Orleans (now Count of Dunois) at hand, ready to undertake the task of reforming the disgraceful army and of bringing it into a state of reasonable discipline. This was badly needed, for the wretched people of France had never suffered more cruelly at the hands of marauding bands, admitting no central command, as in the years which followed immediately upon the death of Joan. And not only was Charles rescued by Richemont and Dunois on the military side, but on the side of internal and financial matters by the justly celebrated merchant, Jacques Cœur. Charles was as truly named by history, *le bien-servi*, the well-served, as he little deserved the devotion and ability placed thus repeatedly at his command. The career of Jacques Cœur ended with disgrace and financial ruin, though, more fortunate than Joan, he managed to escape with his life.

Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts of Richemont, Dunois and Jacques Cœur, the army and the country were both being restored into some sort of order. The English possessions were dropping from them one by one, and by 1450, after the decisive battle of Formigny, nothing remained to them but the town of Calais. Thus the fulfilment of all Joan's prophecies was complete.

It is now perhaps a little easier to estimate what she had actually brought about. Although she had not lived to see the full accomplishment of all that she set out to do, there can be no doubt that by her own resolute action she laid the train which brought the Hundred Years' War to an end. Had Joan of Arc never existed, it is impossible to say what would have happened. Possibly Bedford, by a supreme effort, might have induced his Government to grant him the men and supplies he needed, and have ended by bringing the whole of France under English rule. If we admit this possibility, we shall also have to admit that Joan of Arc, instead of being England's worst enemy, was in fact England's best friend. For the Kings of England would naturally have tended to make France their headquarters; Paris instead of London would have become their capital, and their damp little island away in the north would have shrunk to a mere dependance like an outlying province of the Roman Empire. But such speculations are vain, since, thanks to Joan of Arc, things turned out quite differently.

But although, having told the whole story, it becomes easier to estimate her accomplishment and the importance of her career in European history, we are no nearer to having solved the central problem: how did she do it? How did this unlettered girl, still in her teens, with no knowledge of war, no experience whatsoever outside the daily round of her

village life, persuade princes to listen to her and hardened captains to trust themselves and their armies to her leadership? Once she had relieved Orleans, it is not difficult to understand that the troops and the populace were ready to follow her anywhere, believing that God's Hand was on her shoulder and His Voice in her ear, but it does not explain how she was able to carry out practical military tactics or to know exactly what risks she could safely take and how far she could or could not go. Genius, say some; inspiration, say others, both meaning much the same thing. Genius of the same quality as Shakespeare's, who could not, rationally speaking, be familiar with every complicated character he created, and who yet, by some inexplicable means of his own, seems to get right inside their minds so that every word rings true and adds a fresh illumination to what we already know. Is it genius, or something more, which invests the peasant Joan with a strange majesty that makes her tower so high above the princes and the captains? It is a question to which we shall possibly never find the complete answer. All that we can say for certain is that her own faith in her direct communion with God was beyond doubt, and that there is no more sure method of persuading other men than first to be utterly persuaded yourself. It is not a thing to be deliberately acquired, and any affectation or exaggeration immediately makes itself felt and betrays the falsity within. Joan cannot be called fanatical; she was far too sensible and shrewd for that; but she

certainly carried within her soul that inner force which can move mountains. It is the gift which has grown only too rare to-day, when we are inclined to analyse and explain everything until we end by explaining it away. Our minds have worked until our souls seem to have grown incapable of a sublime acceptance such as Joan's. She, the saint and soldier, stands as the immortal example of what the purest and most unquestioning faith may achieve.

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